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AN
EVANGELICAL MINISTRY,
THE
SECURITY OF A NATION:
A SERMON,

PREACHED IN BEHALF OF
THE AMERICAN HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

In the Bleecker Street Church, New York,

JANUARY 2, 1848.

BY
REV. ERSKINE MASON, D. D.
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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PRINTED BY WILLIAM OSBORN,
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A SERMON.

"BUT THE PEOPLE THAT DO KNOW THEIR GOD SHALL BE STRONG."

DANIEL, XI. 32.

IF the object of the following discourse, were to illustrate the doctrine of the text, in reference simply to individual character, the task before me would be comparatively easy. No proposition, I imagine, admits of a demonstration, at once so simple and so perfectly conclusive as this—"The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." It little matters, so far as the clearness and completeness of the proof are concerned, what may be the points of the instituted comparison between them, or in what relations you may choose to look at them. You elevate the views of man as an individual, raise his tone of feeling and standard of character, put him in possession of the elements and sources of the purest, and most rational enjoyment, in proportion, as you bring him to an intimate, personal and practical acquaintance with God.

As a member of the social compact, the confidence of his fellows in him, and his consequent influence over them, will, all other things being equal, correspond in degree with his manifested Christianity; while in regard to his hopes for the future, the objects which

they respect, and the foundation upon which they rest—the ground of his confidence and dependence—no other men will pretend for a moment to compare with him—“for their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges.” Thus, is every God-fearing man in our world, a living illustration, and a standing, unanswerable proof of the sentiment of my text, that “the people who do know their God shall be strong.” But if the doctrine of my text, in this relation, admits of no dispute, am I treading upon questionable ground, when I affirm that the history of nations as such, will furnish its no less clear and convincing illustrations? What is true of men as individuals, must be true of the same men as members of the social compact. The distinction between organic and individual life, if indeed there is any distinction, is certainly too transcendental to be used for any practical purpose. We can hardly conceive of a community, separate from the individuals who compose it, and I shall not be called upon to prove, that when individual life ceases universally, organic life must be extinct. So we cannot separate national character from the character of those who go to make up the nation. Paralyze the industry of men as individuals, and you dry up the resources of the community—depress the tone of morals universally, and you have a wide-spread scene of national degeneracy; and whatever influence predominates, so as to regulate the feelings, aims and pursuits of men, must determine the organic character of the nation to which they belong.

I am not sure, my brethren, but that we stand upon firmer ground, when we assume the advocacy of our doctrine in its relation to communities, than when

we attempt to demonstrate it in its application to individuals. It would, I think, be rather difficult to make out our case, were it necessary to show that there never had been, in a worldly point of view, a well conditioned, successful, prosperous atheist, or ungodly man. True, we might clearly evince, that he owed his prosperity to the very state of society, which he would revolutionize if he could, and to the prevalence of principles, the influence of which he does all in his power to counteract; while we could not deny the possibility or the reality of such a case. But a nation of atheists, a community whose individual members have thrown off the restraints of moral obligation, never yet has been prosperous, never yet has had even a permanent existence. It may have seemed for a moment to have risen to splendor, but the very vices which have contributed to its apparent exaltation, have produced its destruction. So that we stand upon the authority of facts, as well as of revelation, when we say "The people," and they only, "who do know their God shall be strong."

Upon the strength of this general principle, I appear before my hearers to-day, to insist upon the necessity of giving permanency and extension to the religious influence of our land. I am happy in the assurance, that they whom I am called to address do not demand of me any lengthened illustration of the principle itself, which lies at the foundation of the argument. We have read the inspired record, and have found in the Jewish commonwealth, a convincing illustration of our doctrine. The peculiarities which marked their condition grew out of their relation to God. Their knowledge of his character, his will and his ways, isolated

them from all around them, and placed them on a commanding eminence above them. The light which made them so conspicuous amid the surrounding darkness, and the influence which shed such a smiling aspect over their natural as well as moral scenery, came from the inner shrine of the tabernacle, where God resided.

The same principle has ever since been receiving its illustrations. The unmeasured superiority of Christian over unevangelized nations, is universally acknowledged. Whatever may be men's philosophical opinions, we are certain there must be a universal agreement as to the fact, that in all which gives true glory to a people, which defines and defends human rights, all that tends to promote public prosperity and to secure peace and happiness to the families of a land, there is no comparison to be instituted, between those who have and those who have not, a knowledge of God, as revealed in his word. We are willing to leave it to the most inveterate enemy of the Gospel to say, whether the institutions of a professedly Christian country could be exchanged for those of the most exalted of other lands, without the loss of what we hold most valuable in our condition, and the surrender of what gives its greatest security to our homes.

Surely I need not argue to such an audience as the present, the point, that in the possession of Christianity alone is to be found the reason of the difference between ourselves and other nations, whom we have outstripped. Men may talk of the advance which has been made in political science and in that of jurisprudence, in every thing in short which tends to give fixedness to a country; but these are only proximate

causes, which themselves need an explanation, and for which, we are driven by necessity to the influence of revealed truth. The possession and influence of Christianity alone, accounts for the difference between ourselves and other nations of ancient and modern times. "We have not finer natural powers than they. We have not a higher and purer patriotism. We do not excel them, in the fire of genius and the vigor of intellect; for even now they are our teachers, in the melody of verse, and the strictness of reasoning, and the mightiness of oratory; and we would sit at their feet when we would learn to be mentally great. We are still the pupils of the dead sages of ancient states. We light our torches at their inextinguishable lamps; and if we even think of rivalling their literature, we are never vain enough to imagine that we surpass it."

The secret of our prosperity and advancement, is found in the influence of divine truth over the mind and heart. There is a pervading public sentiment, inspired by the teachings of the sacred oracles, which acts as a regulator of the varied forces, which are at work in the general system, and which, in proportion to its power, keeps the whole machinery steady. Whatever influence avarice may have had in peopling this land, moral principle, and a deep, strong, effective sense of right, as taught in the word of God, gave character to its institutions. The influence of our forefathers' piety, shaped our course as a nation, and was woven into the very texture of our system. We feel it to this day, as we enjoy its fruits in the institutions of education and religion, in our schools, our colleges, our sanctuaries, our Sabbaths and our preached Gospel. The republics of our southern con-

tinent were founded by men of another spirit and stamp. Vastly superior to our forefathers, in mere natural advantages of soil and climate, they were vastly inferior to them, in every thing which goes to constitute true moral greatness; and the results have varied accordingly. Even now, they have borrowed from us much that is valuable, in our laws, in our civil and political institutions—they have borrowed every thing but our religion, and they maintain at best but a sickly existence. The heart of the system is unhealthy, and irregular in its pulsations, and with all the natural elements of progress, there is nothing to secure, or to regulate their development. Had our forefathers been men of a different stamp, of a less stern morality, and less practical deference to the teachings of the word of God, they had transmitted to us a like sickly constitution, a like heritage of ignorance and imbecility. Never should we have stood higher than they, in all those respects, in which confessedly they are immeasurably distanced, had we not been blessed with the influence of the enlightened religion of the Bible. We can summon then every man, even the greatest enemy of religion, as a witness on the side of that which he openly denies, and he cannot keep back his acknowledgment, that no agency is, to any degree, comparable with that of Christianity, when the ends to be compassed, are the best interests of man in all his relations.

If the principle I have just laid down is the correct one, it seems to follow by necessary consequence, that our security as a people, is to be found only in the continued and permanent influence of the same principles, in which our institutions originated, and which have thus far secured our prosperity. Whatever may be

said of other communities, crushed under the iron hand of despotism, too ignorant to understand all their rights, and too debased and enervated to assert those which are known, we can never flourish without the influence of the Gospel. The dangers to which we are exposed, grow out of those very peculiarities, which, rightly directed and controlled, furnish the brightest promise of our increasing greatness. A vast and enlarging territory, giving rise as it must to different and conflicting interests, requires more than iron bands to prevent it from breaking by its own weight. In proportion as you enlarge any sphere, and bring into it new and different influences, you must increase the great central power which binds the whole together, and prevents the different parts from flying off under the action of their own uncontrolled force. The rapidity with which information is diffused—the varied, and generally enjoyed means of mental development, are at once the brightest and darkest omens in our national firmament. Every thing depends upon the direction which educated mind shall take, and the ends to which it shall devote its energies. “Knowledge is power.” An untaught people are harmless, for they are too debased to know their strength, and can generally be controlled by the influence of the enlightened few, or certainly by the physical force which those few know well how to apply. But an enlightened people are mighty for any thing to which they may put their hand—mighty for evil or for good, according to the point to which their energies may be turned. And whether the means so generally employed for raising up an intelligent community, and in which we pride ourselves, as constituting one of our peculiar glories, are promises of days of increasing

light, or presages of approaching moral darkness, remains yet to be determined.

I am not to be understood as depreciating mental culture, or pleading for popular ignorance as furnishing a characteristic of the best type of society, when I say that our system of public education is as yet an experiment, for the results of which our best and wisest men are looking with the most trembling anxiety. Education is a good, the diffusion of knowledge is a good; we would not set a limit to the one, nor raise any barriers or checks to the other. And so is a vigorous constitution a blessing, and so likewise is muscular strength; but a man had better be a puny, sickly thing, than a being of wondrous powers, devoting all his strength to perpetrate acts of violence and crime. And a man had better be ignorant, than know only how to be wicked—better remain untaught, than be educated for purposes of iniquity. Our popular systems of mental discipline, (I need not prove it to any of my hearers,) provide only for the culture of intellect and the attainment of knowledge, but furnish no security for the right direction of the powers which they nourish into strength, nor for the right use of the knowledge they are designed to impart. They are as perfect illustrations, as could well be imagined, of the entire divorcement of mental from moral training—preparing men for action, without determining the nature of that action—gifting them with great energies, and yet leaving their application wholly an uncertainty. It is thus the fearfully hazardous experiment is going on, of communicating power without the disposition to use it rightly—running the risk of making men fools in attempting to make them wise—elevating them, without giving them

what can alone prevent them from becoming giddy at their height; and in view of the well known tendencies of human nature, it seems to be, not only preparing the way for evil, but like giving the strength of a giant to the sinews and muscles of wickedness. In short, education without moral influence, while it can be looked upon as the offspring only of infidelity, can be regarded as the parent only of anarchy.

I do not know of any way but one, in which we can convert these omens of evil, into harbingers and means of good. In view of our national peculiarities, and the state of public sentiment which prevails, I do not see how we can infuse a decidedly Christian sentiment into any of our legally established systems of education. The most that we can do, or as I imagine, should attempt to do, (and the thought is by the way worthy of the attention of every right-thinking Christian man,) is to keep these sources of influence away from the control of those who would poison them; and if we cannot infuse into the fountains whence our youth are drinking, the salt of Christian truth, we ought at least carefully to watch them, and prevent their being polluted by the foreign dangerous admixtures of infidelity and error.

We need, however, and must have, something more than prevention. Human nature is not in that vigorous and healthy state which requires only care to avoid evil, but it is actually diseased, and demands positive remedial agents to effect a cure, or at least to check the progress of the malady. The salt of the earth is the religion of the Bible. The only safeguard of all we hold dear—our comforts for time and our prospects for eternity—is found in the diffusion of evangelical influence. There must be some provision made for

throwing a controlling power over human passions, which a thousand circumstances combine to inflame, and for giving a right direction to those energies, which we are nourishing into giant strength. The pride, and ambition, and covetousness, and sensuality of man, must be brought under the restraining power of the Eternal throne. The "Sampson of infuriate lust" will break asunder, with perfect ease, all cords but those with which Almighty God alone can bind it; and over the scene which these mighty passions are describing, must evangelical truth shed down its precious influence—the only effectual check to their working—the only security against their dreaded result.

It seems to me, however, a work of supererrogation to argue this point before Christians; or before men, who, though they may not be Christians themselves, yet can feel the indirect influence of Christianity, and can trace all their present earthly blessings, and all their favorable, spiritual circumstances, to their source in the religion of their forefathers. Assuming then this point as granted, we turn our attention to the inquiry—the great practical inquiry after all—How are we to provide for the extension of religious principle, and secure the permanent ascendancy and control of religious influence?

In agitating this question, I would not under-rate any agencies, wisely constructed and plied for bringing the mind of our population in to contact with religious truth. But while each one is important in its sphere, and may be indispensable in view of the immediate end it contemplates, we must fall back upon the stated ministry of the truth, as the prime and most effective agency, and the one which in reality gives value

and efficiency to all the rest. Every part in a watch, is essential to the perfectness of the whole. You must have all of them to constitute the time-piece entire, and faithfully to indicate the movements of the hours ; but if the main-spring is not there, the rest are useless. And what that main-spring is to the movements of a watch, is the regular, stated ministry of the word to all the religious movements of the age.

It is a truism, almost, to say, that God's appointments are the wisest and the best. And when I read that he has "ordained by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe ;" when I find, that he has thus made the pulpit a central point of light and moral power—selected it as his special agency to throw the influence of his truth over the minds of men, I know that it cannot be dispensed with. I could not bring myself to put such an affront upon God, as to give any other instrumentality the precedence. Mighty as is the power of the press—and that power is felt from one end of our land to the other—it is not the power of the pulpit ; nay, in a religious point of view, the latter gives its influence to the former. Bibles, and books, though multiplied a hundred fold, and scattered with assiduous industry over the whole length and breadth of our land—Bibles without preachers—would be, to a lamentable extent, Bibles without readers. Nay, all other agencies of whatever kind for the diffusion of religious truth, owe their very existence to a stated ministry, and would no longer be effective, or even be put forth, were the prophets to cease out of the land ; and the arrest which would at once be put upon the propagation of divine knowledge, in the event of the closing of our churches and the silencing of our minis-

ters, would furnish a most striking illustration of the truth, that “the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

Joyfully do we hail every effort that is made to rescue man from ignorance and degradation. The varied influences which are at work to stem and turn back the current of vice and infidelity—which, unchecked, would bear down all things, a wreck upon its foaming and boiling waters—are our signs of promise, and our warrants for hope. But, **THE MINISTRY OF THE TRUTH**—that, after all, is the great palladium of safety; and when I look upon our wide spread valleys and scattered villages, teeming with a busy population, I cannot rejoice, unless I know that the Church is there, and the Sabbath is there; and whatever be the means of improvement they may enjoy, we cannot depend upon them, unless we see the spire pointing heavenward; for that, and that alone, indicates a centre of civilization, whence humanizing influences go out to our fellow men—a focus, whence diverge the rays of a moral illumination, lighting up the darkness, showing men the path of earthly peace, and leading the wanderer to the only refuge for the sinner and the lost.

If we were to confine our attention to the simple inculcation of divine truth in the sanctuary, which is after all, the peculiar work of the ministry, we should have enough to justify all the remarks we have made. But we must not overlook the fact, that around the Church and its ordinances, cluster, as round their life-giving centre, their living heart, all those institutions which ennoble man and shed a beauty upon society. Our forefathers were as marked for their practical wisdom, as for their implicit deference to the

will of God. In their organizations, provision was first made for the preaching of the Gospel, and from their well ordered churches, came, as off-shoots, all their institutions of learning and benevolence. The latter never could have been originated without the former; they cannot now, without them—if they live at all—maintain any but a sickly existence. But I care not where you go, nor what the character of the population of any given spot, if you can but plant a church, with its regular ministry in the midst of them. There may be no great outward demonstration, but there will certainly spring up there a school, and one by one, the varied means of culture and improvement; and when, after a while, you visit the scene, you will find a wonderful change; the physical aspect of nature itself will seem improved, to be in keeping with the great moral revolution which has been effected; you will see a well ordered community; and as you look at the intelligent and well directed and effective industry around you, and see the domestic beauty which sheds its blandishments over households, you can have but feeble pretensions to the name even of a philosopher, if you do not associate all the marks of improvement and progress, with the songs which have been sung, the prayers which have been offered, and the truth which has been preached in the sanctuary.

The power of an enlightened and sanctified ministry, has been too fully acknowledged in every age of the world, to allow us to look upon it as a problem remaining yet to be solved. Friends and foes have alike given their testimony, and that of the latter has been none the less powerful, because indirectly given, or reluctantly wrung from them. Around such a ministry, the men

who fear God and love righteousness have gathered, as though all their hopes of good were identified with its maintenance; while men of a different spirit and opposite tendencies, have made it the objects of their first and strongest attacks, as though it stood in the way — the most formidable barrier to the prosecution of their unhallowed schemes. No man can write the history of our own, or any other evangelized country, without bringing in the influence of the Church and a preached Gospel, as identified with all that has been bright and blessed; and the dark pages of the volume, presenting nothing upon which the eye can love to look, show the absence of evangelical power, because it tells of vacant pulpits, and a paralyzed ministry. The glory of our own New England emanates from her churches, and the institutions to which those churches have given birth, and which they now sustain; and as we feel that he who should tear down her turrets and her spires, and desolate her sanctuaries, would be the enemy of all she holds dear, we have in that very feeling a demonstration, stronger than any logic could furnish, of the mighty, conservative power of a stated ministry.

Then, on the other hand, it is a fact of no doubtful significance, that the enemies of the public good have always been most bitter in their opposition to a preached Gospel. The persons of the priests had never been incarcerated, nor would their blood ever have flowed upon scaffolds, in the dark days, when human passions revelled amid the ruins which their unrestrained and unhallowed excitement had produced, had not their influence been supposed at least, to interfere with the hellish rites which unbridled lust was practising, and

the sacrifices which it demanded for its polluted altar. And who does not know, as he looks abroad over our own land, at the present moment, that men of visionary views, and evil designings, find in an enlightened ministry of the oracles of God, the greatest hinderance to the prosecution of their plans. Men who inveigh against the established order of society, who would break up foundations, and put things to rights, by reconstructing society upon new principles—men, upon whom wondrous light has been breaking in these latter days, who have discovered truth which our fathers never knew, and which Jesus Christ was not competent to reveal, do not hesitate to avow their opposition to the Church of God, and all the institutions to which it gives birth, as the only formidable obstacles to the successful prosecution of their destructive and Utopian schemes. The political demagogue, who feels that he must muzzle the pulpit before he can accomplish his purposes—the raving fanatic who must overthrow the church and its ministry, before he can overthrow the laws and government of his country—the infidel statesman who pointed to the spire of a village church as a public nuisance, because but for it he might gain currency for his liberalizing views—all give their testimony to the conservative power of a preached Gospel. Nay, more, if they were honest, they would confess that to the influence of the Church of Christ and of the principles inculcated in these public nuisances of our land, they owe their personal safety, while they are promulgating their disorganizing views, and endeavoring to compass their disorganizing plans. They are right; they must prostrate the sanctuary, before they can succeed.

Neither is history silent nor observation blind to the

results which follow from a dearth of sanctuary influence. Where the priests' lips are silenced, or cease to keep knowledge, where there is no ministry, or an ignorant and unsanctified one, the scene is any thing but pleasant to look upon. You do not expect to find there the elements of success, the marks of industry and thrift, nor any of those virtues which shed a beauty over the domestic circle, and give its greatest ornaments to society. Not to say any thing of lands lying in moral darkness, we point you to others. The famous act of uniformity, by the operation of which two thousand of England's most enlightened and effective ministers were silenced, or at least shut out from the public exercise of their office, was followed, and that very speedily, by a great and most manifest deterioration of public morals, and diminution of the securities of personal safety. In our own land, the scenes of lawlessness and crime which make us often tremble, are enacted far away from the sound of the church-going bell, among those who have left our older communities and have pressed onward to our distant forests, carrying with them all the passions of unsanctified humanity, and leaving behind them the only influences which can hold them in check. There are, I admit, exceptions to the remark, but they do not affect the truth of our general statement, those exceptions themselves furnishing illustrations of the power of sanctified influence from the consequences of its absence.

It is in view of these general thoughts, that I put in my plea for a regular ministry, and for a hearty co-operation in all those efforts, which contemplate as their object, the giving of this ministry to every portion of our land. We look upon the movements of this nation

with peculiar anxiety; and borrow light from the history of the past, to throw upon the darkness of the future. The wonderful elements of progress which belong to us, and the indomitable spirit of enterprise which marks our people—exciting as they do the astonishment of the beholder—predict some wonderful destiny. The character of that destiny is dependent upon the event of religious influence keeping pace with our civil and political advancement. The scene of our action is continually widening; our people are going farther and farther on, and the waters, which but yesterday were only rippled by the movement of the light canoe, are now ploughed by the freighted vessel; and where are now smiling villages and the busy hum of industry, but yesterday was heard nothing but the echo of the woodman's axe. The animating spirit of this wondrous movement, is mainly a lust for power, or a lust for wealth; and unless the influence of an enlightened ministry goes along with our people, we must look very shortly for precisely such a state of things, as these unrestrained passions may develope. If you can imagine what would be shortly the result here, were our sanctuaries all closed, and our Sabbaths all forgotten, you can easily imagine what must be the result in the coming history of our country, if the influence of a preached Gospel does not keep pace with the other movements of our people.

If there are signs of evil, and omens of coming catastrophe—and wise men and good men see them continually increasing in numbers and magnitude—they are neither reasons for unconcern, on the one hand, nor warrants for despondency on the other. The distant mutterings of the thunder storm bid us flee to our shel-

ter, and look well to our conductors; and the signs which appear in our political horizon charge us to be active, in preparations to meet the storm, and to arrest and scatter the destructive fluid. We have our security, and our only security, and our sufficient security, in the influence of an educated ministry.

If the history of the past presents us with startling predictions, as to our rapid growth for the future, it teaches also, how we may effectually provide against those emergencies which we have reason to dread. But a short time since, within the recollection perhaps of some who hear me, our own State has been densely populated. Fears were indulged, and predictions of evil were uttered; but by means of the same instrumentality which to-day I advocate, we have shed over the scene the influence of a preached Gospel, and those predictions have been falsified, and those fears have proved unfounded. And when you cast your eye abroad over your own State, and see every where its thriving, and intelligent, and orderly population; as you see its churches every where gathering our people within their walls, Sabbath after Sabbath, and feel that the crisis with us is past, and that we are safe; I beg you to remember that we are indebted for this happy result, to "Home Missionary" operations, whose claims I plead before you to-day. A faithful agent is not on light grounds to be thrown aside; a well-tried, effective instrumentality, is not to be displaced to make room for untried, doubtful experiments. We would stand by this agency, and plead for it as for the life and salvation of our country. We wish to send the Sabbath, with the Church and its appointed ministry, wherever our people have gone. Let us compass this result, and we will not fear. Tell me what you may of our ex-

posure; magnify and multiply as you please the evil influences which are at work; unravel the dark schemings of infidelity, and error, in all its Protean forms; talk of the designs of foreign ambition, and the mighty agencies of a foreign spiritual despotism—and what of them all? Their name may be legion, and their array may terrify the timid and the nervous; but give us this one thing, the influence of an enlightened and sanctified, stated ministry, co-extensive with our population, and the result is certain. Nothing can make headway against such an agency. Error can thrive and do its work, superstition can gather up its victims and throw over them its chains, only where that ignorance prevails, which the light of this agency scatters. Anarchy cannot rear its unsightly head under the eaves of the sanctuary, nor vice show its unblushing countenance in the broad sun-light of the Gospel. Wherever men go, let the truth go with them. Let sanctified energy rear a church and establish its ordinances, wherever worldly enterprise gathers a community and rears a village, and who can doubt that our interests are safe, and that our destiny will be glorious, as our energies are irrepressible.

At this very moment, we are feeling the influence and reaping the fruits of this effort. The one thousand educated ministers, which this Institution, through your suffrages, sustains on their varied fields of labor, are not toiling for nothing. We should perhaps better appreciate their value, and understand the effects of their doings, should their toils all at once be suspended. And if we could well sustain them, and make to their number daily those additions, which constantly increasing necessities and an enlarging sphere of labor demand, we should be satisfied, that as we were depend-

ing upon God's own agency for good, we should not fail of the blessing which would result from the honor which God puts upon his appointed instrumentality.

We are living, my brethren, now, not for ourselves alone. The plans which we adopt, and the efforts we put forth, are to tell upon those who shall come after us, and upon the world at large. Of the fruit of the trees which we are planting, our children are to eat ; and that fruit will be bitter or sweet, according to the seed we may sow, and the culture we may give it. Our fathers have handed down to us a fertile and joyous land, and privileges inestimable, and means to preserve and perpetuate them. We feel that they have done their part, and have left for our imitation an example of faithfulness to those who shall come after us. We owe a debt to our ancestry, equalled in magnitude only by that which we owe to posterity. God, too, has done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Our heritage is a goodly heritage. But it is with nations as with individuals, the nature of the blessings conferred, no less distinctly intimates the nature of the obligation imposed, than does the magnitude of those blessings its weight. We have, as a people, a mission to execute. Would to God, that we might not mistake it. The period, and the circumstances in which this land was discovered, the events which led to its settlement, the character of the men who first planted our soil, the institutions which they gave us, seem not only to indicate that God has great purposes to execute through us, but to intimate also the nature of his design. Our mission, is not a mission of carnage, and conquest, and blood. For such an errand we are wholly unfitted ; there is nothing in the genius of our land to qualify, but much to unfit us for

such a work. There have been men, whom God seems to have flung into the world to curse it; there have been nations, whom God seems to have raised up to execute his vengeful and inscrutable purposes; and they have risen upon others' ruin, and triumphed in others' woe. But such an errand is not ours, the execution of such a commission would be fatal to none more than to ourselves. The power of this nation is to be felt by the world, but in another way, and in other forms. It is by the moral influence of free institutions, and an enlightened people, that we are to execute our design. If we can judge of the intention of Providence, from its arrangements and the agencies which it rears, we cannot doubt that we are connected intimately with the execution of God's purposes of mercy in our world; for never have any people been placed in circumstances so well calculated to illustrate the value of Christian principle, and the mighty power of an untrammelled Gospel. Already is our history beginning to teach the nations lessons which they have never before learned. The importance of man, as an individual, in distinction from the importance of men in masses, is the great truth which our institutions illustrate—the great principle, which fully carried out, is to revolutionize the globe. But that principle can never be seen as a true and a safe one, except as the influence of the Gospel prevents its perversions and defines its proper limitations. Hence the importance, not only to ourselves, but to the nations generally, and to the kingdom of Christ, of a general prevalence of Gospel influence through our country. It is a fact of no little interest, that the destinies of the world are, at this moment, in the hands of the two nations where this great principle is carried out, under the restrictions and

direction of the Gospel of Christ. The hopes of unborn generations in every part of our earth, their hopes for time, and their hopes for eternity, hang upon England and America. Every where, from the rising to the setting sun, is their influence felt. The agitations and heavings, which are every where distinctly visible, are the results of a motion communicated by ourselves. The power we are exerting is every day becoming greater, and more manifest in its effects, as our strength is increased, and our resources are developed. What the world shall be, ere the present century shall have completed its cycle, depends very much upon what we shall be ; and what we shall be, depends upon the suspension, or extension of gospel influence. We are acting, therefore, now, not for ourselves alone, nor yet for our own immediate posterity, but for the world, and for the general interest of the Redeemer's kingdom. If we act well our part, all is safe ; but if not, all is lost. It is, therefore, not Christianity alone, but patriotism and philanthropy, which summon us to the work of disseminating the knowledge of God and of his grace. If we fail in our mission, the secret of our decline, will be found in our neglect of him, who raised us to greatness, to make us the instrument of good. And whatever causes men may propose, as an explanation of our downfall from the summit of privilege, they will be the sound reasoners, who refer the decline of our strength to the decline of our Christianity ; and who point to our text, as explaining the change, maintaining that we had never been reduced to subjection and vassalage, but through a forgetfulness of what is written in the Bible—"The people who do know their God shall be strong."

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